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"Walk In wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time"
(Colossians 4:5).

Making Life Count – Together

Lesson Subject: Family recreation and leisure time should be guided by biblical principles.

L41. Date: June 1982. **Text:** Ephesians 5:6-17. **Topic:** Family.

Godly principles of Christian home life are being challenged today. The warfare is so subtle that many are unaware of it. The non-Christian lifestyle is constantly presented by television, novels, and popular songs, as if it were moral, normal, and permissible. (One survey found that 80 percent of the "family situation" programs on television have role reversal of husband and wife.) Families will be influenced without realizing it.

Christians must take particular care how they use the time spent in leisure and recreation. Ephesians 5:3-17 sets forth some divine guidelines which can govern the Christian family in labor and in leisure. The wise Christian will note those principles and apply them to his life in practical affairs of daily life.

I. DO NOT INDULGE (Ephesians 5:3~ 7)

"Be not ye therefore partakers with them" (verse 7) is the divine principle written over all the works of the flesh (Ephesians 5:3-7; Galatians 5:19-21).

A. There are sins to shun (verses 3, 4). Sexual immorality of every kind is to be shunned. Unchastity, debauchery, and every other kind of impurity is alien to the Christian spirit.

Spiritual sins of a bad spirit are to be shunned also. The ruthless greed

of a covetous spirit, "the itch to get your hands on what belongs to other people," is the very opposite of the Spirit of Christ.

Sins of speech are to be avoided like the plague. Dirty stories, foul talk, suggestive jokes, and all ribald jesting must be put away once for all.

A person can be pure only as he shuns sin. He can shun sin only as he is filled with the Holy Spirit.

B. There are people to pity (verse 5). Popular living is presented as "high living and free loving." But it is not the best lifestyle. Pity the poor person who has to pass from one partner to another, who finds pleasure only in the unchaste and impure, and who is filled with greed. Such a person will miss heaven! Never imitate his lifestyle.

C. There is counsel to reject (verse 6). Drinking, adultery, and kindred sins are presented as normal and permissible by television, by novels, and by songs. Example as well as words speak a recommendation for them. The person who imitates that lifestyle is being deceived — someone is making a fool of him. That is not the way of happiness. The end of that way is the judgment of God!

D. There are principles to follow (verse 7). To be a "partaker" with wicked people means to be their co-partner, to "throw in one's lot with them." How tragic for a person who calls himself by the name of Christ to follow that course. Therefore, Christians must refrain from the television programs, novels, music, and companions which promote the non-Christian lifestyle. Here is the principle: *"Be not ye therefore partakers with them"* (Ephesians 5:7).

II. YOU ARE DIFFERENT (Ephesians 5:8-10)

"Walk as children of light. . . . proving what is acceptable unto the Lord" (verses 8, 10).

A. You are a different person (verse 8). There was a time in your life when you lived in total darkness because your heart was full of darkness. That time is no more. Now, because you are in the Lord, you are full of light. You must live as one who is fully at home in the light. *"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them"* (Ephesians 2:10).

B. You live a different life (verse 9). The effect of the light of God which shines in you is evidenced by goodness, righteousness, justice, and truth in you. There is produced in you that wonderful nine-fold fruit of the

Spirit: *“love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance”* (Galatians 5:22, 23). The light of God in the believer produces a lifestyle which is the very opposite of the sins which the unregenerate pursue.

C. You bear a different witness (verse 10). The Christian learns by experience what pleases the Lord, and so becomes a living witness of that to others. Here is God's practical purpose in the salvation of each believer: *“That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God”* (I Peter 4:2).

Keep that truth in mind, fellow Christian. You are different! You were darkness, but now you are light. *“Walk as children of light”* (verse 8). Let your labor and your leisure bear witness to the change which has come in you.

III. REPROVE THE WRONG (Ephesians 5:11-14)

“Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them” (Ephesians 5:11). It is not the business of the Christian to go around butting into other people's lives in an effort to "straighten them out." Of course not. But the Christian must be a witness for right and against wrong by the proper example in word and deed.

A. The Christian can reprove the wrong by refusing to participate in it (verse 11). He must have no fellowship ("mutual sharing, joint participation") with those who follow the way of darkness. He is light in the Lord.

Here is a businessman who refuses to drink liquor with his associates. Here is a student who refuses to "smoke pot" with his classmates. Here is a young woman who refuses to compromise her virtue because "everyone else is doing it." In each case, the Christian shows the evil of such deeds by refusing to engage in them.

B. The Christian can reprove the wrong by refusing to repeat by word or deed the evil things done (verse 12). It is degrading to speak of sins which some commit. Let no Christian tell a joke that condones drunkenness, or that gives a suggestion of sexual immorality, or that arouses the passions of greed, bitterness, or other passions of the flesh which lead to sin.

It is reported that a member of the cabinet of President Abraham Lincoln came into a meeting with "the latest joke" to tell. He prefaced it by

saying, "I see there are no ladies present." "No," replied the President, "but there are gentlemen here." The joke was never told!

"Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man" (Colossians 4:6).

C. The Christian can reprove the wrong by exhibiting the opposite virtues (verse 13). Light will show clearly what is hidden in darkness. God's design is that the Christian's light (his testimony by word and deed) will show this: *"That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; Holding forth the word of life"* (Philippians 2:15, 16). Thank God for shining Christians.

D. The Christian can reprove the wrong by growing in spiritual discernment and leading others to the light (verse 14). God calls throughout the Bible for the sleeper to awake and to receive the light which Christ makes to dawn upon men.

Christians are not to engage in wrong things; they are to expose them for what they are. That is possible only when Christians are different in attitude and act, thought and word. That kind of Christian witness is used by the Holy Spirit to convict men of sin and call them to salvation in Jesus.

IV. FOLLOW THESE PRINCIPLES (Ephesians 5:15-17)

"See then that ye walk circumspectly" (verse 15).

A. Guard your lifestyle (verse 15). What does it mean to *"walk circumspectly"*? It means to walk strictly, to walk without stumbling, to live your life with a solemn sense of responsibility. It means to live under the government of sensible thoughts, not to act thoughtlessly. It means that one lives by rules of right conduct, not responding to the feelings of the moment in determining the direction of his life.

The only safe way for one to live is to keep a tight reign on himself, permitting no action which has not passed the close examination of sanctified wisdom. To live otherwise is to be a simpleton, not a sensible person.

B. Make the most of each opportunity (verse 16). *"Redeeming the time"* is the way the Bible states that principle. It means to "buy up the time" in the literal translation. Do not let the time slip by in waste or misuse. Evil days are upon us. Difficulties are confronted by every Christian almost every day. That is why time must not be wasted. It must be used in the best possible way.

That does not mean the Christian must be busy every moment. Leisure time can refresh both body and spirit. It can be used for the benefit of the family. It can help man and glorify God, if it is used rightly.

C. Never become reckless (verse 17). The King James Version states the opening of the verse as "*Be ye not unwise.*" It can otherwise be translated, "Do not grow thoughtless," or "You cannot afford to be reckless."

A careless act, or a thoughtless word, or a weakness in character can scar for a lifetime. Whether at work or in leisure, the Christian must keep on guard. The devil never ceases to work.

D. Know and follow the will of God (verse 17). It is the Christian's privilege and duty to understand and do the will of God. He is to exercise spiritual discernment that he may know what is right and wrong. And, praise God, the Christian can know and do the will of his God.

"For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13). That is to say, it is God's own power in the Christian which inspires both the desire and the ability to do what pleases Him. Every Christian can do the will of God from the heart (Ephesians 6:6).

Now for a moment of review. Look back over the main points of this lesson commentary — the headings which are printed in solid capitals. Think of them in the light of how you spend your evenings when you are off work, how you spend your Saturdays and Sundays, how you spend your vacation time. Do you indulge in improper things by thought or deed? Are you different from the unregenerate in where you go, what you do, how you talk, and what you enjoy? Do you condemn the wrong and approve the right in word and deed? Do you follow after the principles of holiness? If you answer those questions with a true "Yes," you are a good witness of Jesus Christ.

If you had to answer some of those questions with an honest no, you need to make a change in your lifestyle now. Do not delay. Settle the issue now.

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:1, 2).

QUESTIONS

1. Why is the Christian's use of leisure time so important?
2. How does verse 7 set a principle for Christian living?

3. Why should a Christian shun sin in word or deed?
4. How can a Christian stand against evil influences around him?
5. How can a Christian walk as a child of light?
6. How does non-participation reprove wrong?
7. How does Colossians 4:6 teach us to reprove wrong?
8. What does Philippians 2:15, 16 teach about Christian example?
9. How can you "*walk circumspectly*" on your vacation this year?
10. How can you know and do the will of God this week?